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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, April 15, 1942

SUBJECT: "Spring Lamb Pointers." Information from the Agricultural Marketing Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Mid-April brings good news to you menu-makers. It brings news that Spring lamb is again in the store. The marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture tell me the very first of the Spring lamb came into the market about three weeks ago. By the last of the month we should have plenty of lamb.

Of course that doesn't mean that you must wait until the end of the month to serve lamb. No indeed. Even now there's quite a bit of Spring lamb and there's a lot of the heavier, older lamb. Right now while both kinds of lamb are in many of your stores, some of you may be wondering just what the difference is.

Now some of you homemakers -- you who are beginners anyway -- may have an idea that Spring lamb merely means lamb that comes on the market in the Spring. That's what anybody might think because of the name -- and it's partly true. But it's not the whole story. Early Spring lamb is the meat from very young animals -- lambs that are only three to five months old. So they are rather small. Usually the carcasses weigh between 30 and 35 pounds, sometimes as little as 20 pounds, rarely more than 40. And, of course, that means that the meat is a little more uniformly tender, and it's almost always more delicate in flavor. In color, it will look a shade lighter than meat from older lambs. The extreme tenderness and the very delicate flavor are probably the main reasons why Spring lamb is such a favorite.

The leg of Spring lamb is a cut you hear a lot about. Besides flavor and tenderness, its size is an advantage for many homemakers. Generally it's small. And there isn't so much question about left-overs. But left-overs aren't a problem for every homemaker. Some buy the heavier and bigger legs of lamb and count on using the left-overs for another day as they have planned. Sometimes they find it's cheaper to

buy these heavier cuts. And, as I said, lamb left-overs aren't a problem unless the family is very small. Sliced cold lamb is among the favorite cold-cuts. And with some of the warm days we can expect now, there comes a yen to rush the season a bit and serve cold sliced meat. Or if this burst of Spring hasn't hit you, then there are loads of other uses for left-over lamb. A glance at most of the good cook books will prove this to you.

Now, when I was talking about buying the heavier lambs to save money, I didn't mean that Spring lamb is always more expensive. That isn't a definite rule, but it is often true at this time of the year, and it's a point you may wish to check in your own meat store.

Speaking of rules, here's one that does hold quite well. The heavier the lambs the more meat there is in proportion to the bone. Also the bigger the lamb, the bigger is each cut. Now these two points may make a real difference to you when you have your mind set on lamb chops. The one common cry against the lamb chop has to do with its small amount of meat. You can be pretty sure you'll get more meat on chops from heavier lambs. Of course, the flavor may not be as delicate. And whether you want more meat with a little more taste or less meat per chop and a more delicate flavor is purely a matter of your own choice. But there's another point worth considering, especially as it has to do with the cost of enough meat to satisfy your appetite. Cost of our meals is mighty important to most of us these days.

Of course, many things affect price besides the age and the amount of meat or weight per cut. The total supply of meat on the market makes a big difference. So does the amount of money people have to spend. Then there's the location of the store for another thing. The kind of service the store gives -- whether the customers want packages delivered -- whether they demand credit or whether they'll pay cash right then and there. Then, too, the grade of the meat will usually make a difference. Other things being equal, you can expect meat to be higher in price as the grade is

higher. All lamb isn't stamped with its federal grade, but more and more of you homemakers can identify the grade by the stamp right on the meat. I say more and more homemakers because more and more meat is graded and stamped for consumers. If you aren't familiar with these grades, it may help if I run through the grade names. Then you can be on the look-out for them. The highest Federal grade is prime, next is choice -- that's really a very high quality. Then there's Good, Commercial and the fifth grade stamped for consumers is called Utility.

And let's not skip the different cuts while we're thinking about buying lamb. Some cuts are always relatively more expensive than others. Meat from the neck, shank, breast and flank are usually in the lower-cost group. And they suggest some mighty good stew, broth, ground meat patties, and the breast is excellent for a low-cost stuffed roast.

In the medium-cost cuts belong the leg and chuck. And loin and rib chop cuts are usually relatively higher. The organs -- as they're called -- the heart, kidney and liver of lamb are all good to eat just as they are from beef and veal. And so are the tongue and the brains. All of these are excellent sources of some of the vitamins and minerals. These meats are economical. And this, marketing men say, is somewhat because women don't know how good they are. And this, in turn, may be because homemakers don't know how to fix 'em. I can't go into the details of how to prepare them today -- there isn't time. But just let me suggest this. If you're really interested in serving good food -- I mean good tasting food with lots of nutritive value, it will probably pay you to find out about these more unusual meats. Now don't forget that the Spring lamb is here--with all its delicate flavor. And that the stores also have plenty of the heavier lamb -- more economical perhaps for some of you. And now -- those are all the lamb market pointers I have time to give you today.

